

**Acts 26:24-32.**

Have you heard the saying, "Almost Only Counts In Horseshoes And Hand Grenades."

"Almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades" means that "almost" is not enough in most situations. When we want a job completed or want something done, "almost" is never the answer we're looking for because we want it to be "yes" or "finished."

What are some things that you are almost with?

**Almost Persuaded (page 327)**

In the scripture today, we can recognize 3 types of responses when the gospel is presented.

**I. Festus, the Roman Governor.**

- Festus has just come on the scene, and he is a typical high-class Roman of his day.
- He was in the good graces of the Emperor Nero, and he has become Governor of Syria and Palestine to try to clean up a bad situation.
- In these Scriptures Festus is dealing with some of predecessor Felix's bad decisions, mainly the case of Paul. In **Acts 21** and **22** Paul goes to Jerusalem and goes into the temple where a mob of Jews are going to tear him apart. The Roman soldiers, fearing a riot, come and arrest Paul and put him in prison. In **Acts 24**, there is a trial about Paul's case before the then Governor Felix. Felix finds Paul innocent but keeps him in custody hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe to let him go. Paul would not do something like this so Felix kept him in custody for two years. When Felix was recalled to Rome, Felix left Paul in prison as a favor to the Jews.
- When Governor Festus comes on the scene in **Acts 25**, after a few days, he has a trial about Paul's case, and he again finds Paul's innocent based on Roman law, but since much of this was based on Jewish law, Festus suggests that Paul stand trial in Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin. Paul is against this, and he appeals to Caesar. (**Acts 25:12**) Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "**You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go!**"
- Festus, being a wise politician and being new to the region, asked the advice of King Herod Agrippa on Paul's case. Festus did not want to send Paul to the Emperor without explaining the charges against Paul. Festus was in a sticky situation. If he released Paul, this would cause the Jews to riot. If he sent Paul to Rome without any Roman charges, he would look bad to the emperor.
- King Agrippa wants to investigate this matter, so they have a hearing to hear what Paul has to say. Paul addresses his speech to King Agrippa, **verses 1-23**.
- Here in **verse 24**, we have Festus interrupting because he can take it no longer. "**Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!**"

#### **A. IT IS FOOLISHNESS!**

- This was foolishness to Festus. Festus was a typical Roman in his day. He knew a little bit about his own faith in the gods but even his own faith did not concern him that much. Like many in his day, he regarded all faiths, all religions with contempt, as all equally false, or equally true. All of them unworthy of the time and attention of a great man like Festus. (Remember, superstition in **Acts 25:19 KJV**)

***1 Corinthians 1:18, For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

***1 Corinthians 1:23, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,***

#### **B. I DON'T NEED IT!**

- What was important to Festus was to keep in touch with the world, to have the favor of men especially those in places of power like the emperor. This is what was important to him. As for a Jew talking of proclaiming "light to the Gentiles", the very idea was ridiculous! What light did the Romans need, they controlled the world, and they had all the light they needed.
- We have many Festus' in our society. They are good in their business and know it well. They are responsible in their duties and leave a good name behind them. Festus was a man who was making a difference. But he had no faith!
- All that concerned Festus was the here and now. All that concerned Festus was his job and his money and his status in society. He lived as if he had no soul.

#### **C. I AM GOOD ENOUGH!**

- The Festus' of our day care nothing for prayer, or Bible-reading, or communing with God. These things are fine for some folks but not for them! If they ever attend a place of worship, it is only to appear respectable; and too often they never attend except on some great public ceremony, or at a wedding, or a funeral.
- They do not understand faith. Those who are staunch in their faith they do not understand. They look at them as weak fools, not of a strong mind. If they are brought to task about their faith, they brush all remarks aside with a joke or insult. They think such people are crazy! They have spent too much time thinking about things that really don't matter and it is dangerous! People rising from the dead, what a crazy thought!
- This type of people, moral people, good natured people, easy to get along with, unless someone speaks about religion? They desire to be independent and think for themselves. Don't bore them with the things of faith.
- On Sundays or special days like Christmas they visit friends, sleep in, go on a journey, go to the movies, or something else besides going to some religious observance.
- What do we do with people like Festus? Are they beyond hope? No, when sickness and disappointments, deaths of loved ones, come upon them they can turn to God and

begin to seek. With Christ nothing is impossible. Keep praying for them. Be their friends, love them through it, establish yourself trustworthy and accepting of them. One day they might come out of the darkness and into the light!

## II. King Agrippa II

- His great grandfather, Herod the Great, ruled all of Palestine. He was the Herod who killed all the baby boys in Bethlehem.
- His great uncle, King Herod Antipas, ruled in Galilee. He beheaded John the Baptist. This same uncle was the Herod that was in Jerusalem on the Passover when Jesus was crucified. He interviewed Jesus before sending him back to Pilate.
- His father, King Herod Agrippa I, is found in **Acts 12**. He ruled all of Palestine. He was the one who had James the Apostle executed. He was the one who put Peter into prison. After Peter escaped, he was the one who was eaten by worms because he did not give the glory to God.
- Compared to the rest of his well-known family, this Herod was a good one. He ruled over Galilee from AD 52 to AD 70. He tried to be a peacemaker between the Romans and the Jews.
- **Read verses 25-28.**
- Paul is backing Agrippa into a trap. Agrippa was familiar with what Paul was talking about. He and his family had dealings with Christ and with Christians for many years. It was also known that Agrippa was a faithful Jew. If Agrippa says, “No, I don’t believe the prophets,” and then he has problems with his friends in Jerusalem. If Agrippa says, “Yes, I believe the prophets,” then Paul is going to bring up Scriptures from the Prophets that clearly speak about Jesus Christ. Agrippa doesn’t want to get involved in any of this, so he gives this answer in **vs. 28**.
- The King James and New King James give his answer as if he is seriously considering it. However, in other translations, it is a sarcastic answer. It is difficult to translate what his answer was but considering that he didn’t want to hear anymore (He rose and left in **vs. 30**), it probably was sarcastic.

### A. I DIPPED MY TOE IN BUT IT WASN’T FOR ME!

- Agrippa didn’t want to hear anymore because he knew just enough. You and I meet people all the time who say that they went to church when they were young, and they learned this and that and now they don’t want to have any part of it. They know bits and pieces and that is all they want to know. Agrippa was this way with Christianity.
- Agrippa did not like the gospel because it places everybody on the same level. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Agrippa was a king and he refused to mingle with the common people. But this is what the gospel does. The ground is level at Calvary. Everyone sins and everyone comes in the same way. Everyone comes into the church and worships with the rich, poor, slave, free. Everyone. No class distinctions.

## **B. I WANT TO KNOW GOD ON MY TERMS!**

- A genie in a bottle, one I can understand and makes sense to me. One that fits in my box.
- Agrippa also did not like the Christian message because they are saved by faith and not by works. Agrippa was one who liked his works. He flaunted his works to advance his political standing.
- Agrippa also was a proud man who did not want to submit to Christ's authority. Agrippa was the authority, and he could not submit to a humble carpenter from Nazareth. That was beneath him. He was a King and would never stoop so low as to surrender to a poor prophet.
- Notice that Agrippa is more than willing to listen to Paul preach but when Paul starts to get personal; Agrippa gets up and leaves the room. "Paul you've gone from preaching to meddling."
- Agrippa knows a great deal about religion. He knows a great deal even about the Christian faith. He can converse about these things all day. However, when things get personal, and he is asked about his faith that is when he gets up and leaves the room. We have many like this in our society.

## **III. Paul, the Apostle.**

- Paul was a man of strong faith. He threw away all doubts and hesitations.

**2 Tim 1:12, For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**

## **A. I AM LOST WITHOUT GOD!**

- I have tried to do it my way and it hasn't worked or it's falling apart.
- I have poured my time, energy, and life into things, to only be left empty.
- Paul was convinced of the truth of the facts of Christianity.
- Paul was convinced of the truth of the doctrines of Christ.

## **B. I AM LOVED BY GOD!**

- Paul was convinced that he himself had been changed by the power of Christ.
- Paul was convinced of the reality of a world to come. He was not concerned about this life but the life to come. He had no doubt or fear about the future state of his soul.
- Paul knew that by the power of Jesus Christ the unloved, would find love, the orphan would find a home, unwanted would know what it feels like to be wanted, the tired could find rest.

- Strong faith gives inward peace, which makes us independent of earthly troubles, and compels our enemies to wonder.

What is our response to the gospel?

It is foolishness!

I don't need it!

I am good enough!

It's not for me!

I know God on my terms!

**Almost Persuaded (page 327)**

Or

I am lost without God!

I am loved by God!

I want to have a close or closer walk with God.

I want my life to testify of God's love.

***"Your life as a Christian should make non-believers question their disbelief in God." - DIETRICH BONHOEFFER***

**Conclusion**

Agrippa listens to Paul, Festus listens. And what comes of it? They agree that Paul is still innocent. But what are they saying when they get outside of room? It was a good sermon. It was a terrible sermon and that is all.

Agrippa and Festus were so close to the light. They were called to a personal decision.

I pray that our answer will not be, almost. Paul, Cecil, Ron, Mark, Peter, whoever, you almost ...